



食物環境衛生署
Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

香港金鐘道六十六號金鐘道政府合署四十二至四十五樓
42/F-45/F Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong

電話 Tel : 2867 5083 傳真 Fax : 2868 3943 電郵 E-mail : christinewong@fehd.gov.hk

Our ref. : FEHD CM/1-125/55/1 C Pt.2
Your ref. : CB(4)/PAC/R59

27 December 2012

Ms Mary SO
Clerk, Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms SO,

Public Accounts Committee
Consideration of Chapter 7 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 59

**Management of public enquiries and complaints by
the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department**

Thank you for your letter dated 12 December 2012.

As requested, we are pleased to provide our responses to the questions raised in your letter in the **Annex** to facilitate the Public Accounts Committee's consideration of the captioned Chapter of the Audit Report. A soft copy of this letter in both English and Chinese will be sent to you via e-mail.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Christine WONG)
for Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit (fax no. 2583 9063)

Encl.

Chapter 7 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 59
FEHD's Responses to questions raised by PAC

	Questions raised by PAC	Responses from FEHD
(a)	Whether, and if so, what progress has been made by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in reviewing the criteria and practice for classifying cases into service requests and complaints.	Taking into account Audit's observations and after consultation with the Efficiency Unit(EU), FEHD has decided to adopt the same practice as EU and other government departments i.e. it will no longer differentiate cases into "complaints" and "service requests". All "complaints" and "service requests" will be classified as "complaints" and dealt with according to FEHD Administrative Circular on "Handling of Complaints".
(b)	Whether the pledged time frames for replying to service requests and complaints will be revised after the internal and pledged time frames for replying the same have been aligned, and if so, whether the revised pledged time frames will be tightened or relaxed.	<p>According to the time frames set out in General Circular No. 6/2009, bureaux/departments should acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 10 calendar days and strive to provide a substantive reply within 30 calendar days after receipt of a complaint. For complicated cases requiring longer processing time, the complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the case.</p> <p>In light of the Audit's observations and taking into account the time frames set out in General Circular No. 6/2009, FEHD has now aligned its internal and pledged time frames as follow:-</p> <p>An interim reply will be given within 10 calendar days upon receipt of the complaint. In case a substantive reply cannot be made within 30 calendar days upon receipt of the complaint, the complainant will be updated on the progress.</p>

	Questions raised by PAC	Responses from FEHD
		<p>The revised pledged time frames have been implemented since 12 November 2012 and promulgated in the department's website and publicity materials displayed in FEHD offices with interface with the public.</p>
(c)	<p>Whether the FEHD's increase in manpower to cope with the increased workload in carrying out its investigation of water-seepage cases has improved efficiency; if so, please elaborate on the increase in manpower for this purpose.</p>	<p>FEHD's increase/reinforcement in manpower to cope with the increased workload in carrying out its investigation of water-seepage cases has improved efficiency. The increase/ reinforcement in manpower since mid-2011 includes –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) in mid 2011, FEHD deployed 81 Health Inspectors I/II (HI I/II), who are civil servants, to replace in two batches some non-civil service contract Environmental Nuisance Investigators (ENIs) for investigation of water seepage cases with a view to reinforcing the knowledge base of the staff and providing better continuity in the Joint Office's work. After the replacement, there were 85 ENIs in the Joint Office; (ii) to further enhance efficiency of the work and to cope with the increased caseload, a total of 38 additional ENI positions were created in two batches in late 2011 for the Joint Office; (iii) to further enhance workforce stability, nine time-limited HI I/II posts have been created to replace the same number of ENIs since August 2012, and another eight time-limited HI I/II posts would be created for the same purpose in early 2013.

	Questions raised by PAC	Responses from FEHD
		<p>These time-limited posts would last up to end March 2014; and</p> <p>(iv) to strengthen supervisory support for the Joint Office, six time-limited Senior Health Inspector (SHI) posts were created in April 2011 for one year and have been extended for two more years up to end March 2014. In addition, three more time-limited SHI posts have been created in July 2012, making a total of nine time-limited SHI posts up to end March 2014.</p> <p>The above increase/reinforcement in manpower has made it possible for FEHD to make dedicated efforts to reduce overdue cases. There has been a significant decrease in the number of overdue water seepage cases by 43% from June 2011 to November 2012. FEHD will continue to closely monitor caseload and review manpower resources.</p>
(d)	<p>What effective measure(s), apart from reminding staff, will be implemented by the FEHD to ensure data accuracy of the computerized Complaints Management Information System (“CMIS”) (e.g. checking by supervisors, using the system to highlight anomalies, unusual items, etc).</p>	<p>Apart from reminding staff that details of all complaints should be accurately and promptly recorded in the CMIS upon receipt of the complaint, and that the date of the replies given to complainants should be input into the CMIS immediately to reflect the latest position of the cases in the system, as set out in FEHD Administrative Circular on “Handling of Complaints”, supervisors are also required by the Circular to conduct sample checks to ensure that complaint cases are handled appropriately and properly recorded in the CMIS.</p>

	Questions raised by PAC	Responses from FEHD
		<p>A new “email alert” has been implemented in the existing CMIS to remind Case Officers and their supervisors of the dates to issue interim reply or substantive reply on outstanding cases. Apart from that, a weekly summary report will be sent to each supervisor of Case Officers, drawing his attention to the outstanding cases of respective case officers under his command. By so doing, supervisors could easily spot outstanding items and anomalies, if any, and take follow-up actions.</p>
(e)	<p>What measure(s) have been or will be taken by the FEHD to ensure that monthly reports of outstanding cases are followed up by operational units before the full implementation of the new CMIS in September 2014.</p>	<p>FEHD has been providing its directorate officers and heads of districts/sections with monthly reports on overdue cases for monitoring of the case progress. In order to ensure that monthly reports of overdue cases are followed up properly by operational units, FEHD has put long overdue cases and repeated complaints as standing agenda items for discussion at management meetings at the headquarters and district level. Besides, heads of districts /sections are now reminded at regular intervals to oversee the progress of cases undertaken by their staff, make good use of the monthly ageing analysis of overdue cases for monitoring purpose, look into the reasons for any long periods of inaction during investigation of the cases and provide guidance/assistance to their subordinates as necessary with a view to concluding the cases as soon as possible. These requirements have also been incorporated in FEHD Administrative Circular on “Handling of Complaints”.</p>

	Questions raised by PAC	Responses from FEHD
(f)	<p>What are the various means being considered by the FEHD to solicit feedback on its complaint handling system as referred to in paragraph 5.25 of the Audit Report, and whether the FEHD will conduct customer satisfaction surveys.</p>	<p>Various means of collecting feedback from the enquirers and complainants have been considered. They include focus groups, face to face interviews, self-administered questionnaires (either on paper or via electronic means) and telephone surveys. Having assessed the pros and cons of these methods, FEHD considered that telephone surveys should be the most suitable means to solicit customer feedback in terms of ease of access (phone numbers of the target respondents are mostly available), flexibility (interviewer could explore options with respondents), and cost (lower than face-to-face interviews though higher than self-administered surveys). FEHD plans to conduct customer satisfaction surveys to solicit feedback on its complaint handling system after the full implementation of the new CMIS.</p>
(g)	<p>Whether, and if so, what progress has been made by the FEHD in the integration between the systems of the 1823 Call Centre and the new CMIS as referred to in paragraph 6.13(a) of the Audit Report.</p>	<p>FEHD has discussed with the 1823 Call Centre regarding the integration of the 1823 system with the new CMIS, including the transfer of case information between the two systems. The system contractor of the new CMIS has been working on the details of user requirements regarding the integration which will be sent to the 1823 Call Centre for follow-up. FEHD will continue to liaise with the 1823 Call Centre regarding the integration.</p>